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DEFENSE DEPARTMENT BRIEFING

ON RWANDA

RELEASED IN FULL

FRIDAY, JULY 29, 1994

MODERATOR: We have a short announcement here that will be made by Deputy Secretary John Deutch, and we also have General John Sheehan here to answer questions if need be. I thank you for coming on short notice. They can take a couple of questions when they finish with their comments.

MR. DEUTCH: Thank you. I'm here to announce that President Clinton has made a decision on a phased effort that will greatly assist humanitarian relief activities, and secondly encourage Rwandan refugees to return to their homes.

In the first phase of this activity, the Department of Defense will send up to 200 U.S. troops to the Kigali airport to increase air operations and support the UNHCR and humanitarian organizations to distribute food, water and medical supplies in Rwanda. The capacity of the Goma airport is essentially saturated. The Kigali airport has double the capacity and is much closer to the northern Rwanda areas and better able to deal with food distribution.

If these efforts bear fruit, in a week or two we will consider expanding this humanitarian effort to a second phase from the Kigali airport. But we shall only do this if we see success and if security conditions permit. I want to stress that this U.S. effort is a humanitarian effort, not a peacekeeping effort, and that it will take place in parallel with the United Nations mission in Rwanda, an operation that is intended to provide general security in that nation.

The U.S. forces will have a security contingent to provide for its own security at the Kigali airfield only. Should conditions require it, additional force is available from Entebbe.

Lieutenant General Jack Sheehan is here with me to answer specific questions about the operation. As you know, Bill Perry will be leaving for Africa tomorrow at 6:00 a.m. to review these Department of Defense humanitarian operations. He will stop at Kigali. During today, there have been several interagency meetings on Rwanda. Secretary Perry, General Shalikashvili, Tony Lake and their colleagues have met, and this approach has unanimous support because it meets the president's objective for directly assisting the massive international relief effort while restricting U.S. participation to a humanitarian role.

That completes my statement. Jack and I will be happy to answer a couple of questions.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: THEODORE SELLIN
DATE/CASE ID: 11 OCT 2002 200000294

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x x x questions.

Q When will the troops start going in? And once they start going in, how long will it be before relief flights can go into Kigali?

GEN. SHEEHAN: First off, as you know, the --

Q (Off mike.)

GEN. SHEEHAN: I'm sorry. The ambassador in Kigali is in consultations with the government of Rwanda. It is a prenotification requirement. They will be notifying the government of Rwanda these relief flights will also be coming in. So it will take a period of time for this notification to take place.

And again, as the secretary indicated, the preconditions for the arrival of these flights are the fact that the RPF knows that they're coming, the government participated in this process, and that the security of these forces is guaranteed by the government of Rwanda. So the first flight, though, should take place this weekend if everything goes in place.

Q Where will the forces be coming from? What units?

GEN. SHEEHAN: The units are out of Europe. We do not identify specific units, but they will be Army units, special forces units and Air Force logistics elements to open up the airport.

Q (Inaudible) -- phase two? If this is a 200-person contingent, is phase two doubling, tripling, bigger? What --

MR. DEUTCH: We have no specific estimate on phase two. Phase two would take place at a time when we were sure that the process of refugees returning to their homes in Rwanda was taking place, as well as the distribution by truck from Kigali of food, water and medical supplies. If that was taking place in satisfactory manner, we would then extend our efforts and it could be larger. And it's not possible at this time to give you a numerical estimate, but it would be taking place in a successful environment of return of refugees and distribution of humanitarian equipment.

Q What kind of equipment will the 200 troops of phase one be bringing with them, and what will be the nature of their mission?

GEN. SHEEHAN: As the secretary indicated, it is a humanitarian mission. They will be bringing those types of equipment that are necessary for airfield operations. They will be bringing communications gear, forklifts, (crash?) fire and rescue systems. And those types of things would facilitate a 24-hour operation at the Kigali airfield.

Q Will U.S. troops effectively control the Kigali airport? And will that take place before Secretary Perry's arrival? He will arrive after the U.S. --

GEN. SHEEHAN: As I said, the discussions with the government of Rwanda are ongoing right now. General Schroeder was in the capital the

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other day. The American ambassador is there. And so I can't tell you if the first flights -- if the U.S. will control the airport by the time Secretary Perry arrives, but that is the intent, that the U.S. will run this airport and eventually hand it over to the U.N. or some other international organization.

MR. DEUTCH: Yes, sir.

Q Two questions. In phase one, does the U.S. responsibility end at the airport --

MR. DEUTCH: Yes.

Q (Inaudible.)

MR. DEUTCH: Yes. In phase one, the responsibility ends at the airport perimeter. There are relief organizations present in Kigali now, and it would be the responsibility of those relief organizations to distribute the supplies.

Q Second question. In phase two, you talk of (merely?) extending the operation. What do you anticipate phase two will be?

MR. DEUTCH: At this time we do not have a decision on phase two, but it would be activities which would assist in the distribution of food supplies. It would be assisting in the distribution by truck to the various parts of Rwanda if conditions permit. We have not reached that decision.

Q Is the way station plan still under consideration?

MR. DEUTCH: That is a part of phase two. And who would man those way stations -- or, excuse me, let me strike that. The people who would be at the way stations would either be from nongovernmental relief organizations or from other countries or U.N. personnel.

Q So are you saying -- as a follow-up, just to be clear, are you saying now that the use of U.S. troops to man those way stations has now been ruled out?

MR. DEUTCH: It's a possibility, but it is certainly something which will be considered in phase two and is not part of the announcement we're making here tonight.

Yes, sorry. I didn't mean to cut you off.

Q Again, we're just trying to get orders of magnitude here. Would phase two be a much larger commitment of forces than the 200, number one? And of the 200 that you're sending in, roughly what percentage is security and roughly what percentage does the rest of it?

MR. DEUTCH: I would not call it a much larger commitment of forces. I would call it a reasonably larger commitment of forces. And the troops that are involved in security, if I'm not mistaken, is a reinforced company or about --

GEN. SHEEHAN: A reinforced company is what we're --

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MR. DEUTCH: -- about 60.

GEN. SHEEHAN: A little more than that; over 100.

Q So it's roughly 50 percent of the forces.

GEN. SHEEHAN: A little over 100 will be security forces. Others of those will be service support personnel and some special forces people there also.

Q Doctor, forgive me. Part of what General Sheehan just mentioned, are these Army or Marine? I came in a little late --

MR. DEUTCH: Army.

Q All right, the second part is the way stations. There seems to be a back-pedaling. Is there a Clinton administration concern that we get caught in another Somalia kind of situation between two fighting groups?

MR. DEUTCH: There is no ambiguity about that at all. This is a humanitarian operation. I want to underline humanitarian operation. I tried to be as clear as I could in the statement that this is acting in parallel with the UNAMIR operation, which is there to maintain security in the country. So there's no intention here of entering into a peacekeeping activity.

Q But just to follow up, you can say in this room humanitarian, but how do the warring factions in Rwanda know that it's purely humanitarian? The U.S. troops are going to be there. Is there concern that there could be a slippery slope and they could be caught in the middle of warring factions?

MR. DEUTCH: There is no concern that there could be a slippery slope because this is restricted to a humanitarian operation. That is why it is a phased set of operations. If there is greater disorder in the country, another route will be taken, and that's not to say we're out because we're pushed out.
We're out

because we do not -- we by intention are trying to help the humanitarian operation.

Q In the first phase, will Kigali be used as an air bridge or ferrying point for other aircraft to go down to Goma and other camps, or will it be strictly used to truck those supplies down there?

GEN. SHEEHAN: It is -- as you know, right now we're going to have to continue to use Goma for the next week or so until we build up the capability at Kigali. The UNHCR is already running food convoys from Kigali to Goma, and there are, in fact, one or two way stations on the road system already that have been set up by relief organizations. So what you're going to do is have a phased operation where Entebbe will be used, Goma will be used and Kigali will be used.

But clearly Kigali has the capability, as the secretary said, to double our through-put capacity. It creates the conditions that would cause the refugees to start a positive movement back to their part of the

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country they came from. And so it's going to be -- all three are going to have to be used, again, because this is a disaster of absolutely monumental proportions that's going to require this type of activity to solve.

Q Do you envision flights coming in from Europe and then they'll switch off to smaller planes that'll then ferry stuff down to Goma?

GEN. SHEEHAN: It's a combination of capabilities.

MODERATOR: Let's take one more question.

Q You talked of the operations paralleling U.N. operations in Rwanda and you talked of the context of paralleling U.N. while -- (inaudible) -- humanitarian operation, you talked of the parallel with the U.N. peacekeeping operation.

What makes you think there's going to be one? I mean -- (inaudible) -- what makes you think -- are you confident there is going to be one?

MR. DEUTCH: Well, there is a U.N. peacekeeping operation in Rwanda. It's commanded by a Canadian general and it's manned by troops from several nations, which is completely separate from the French activity, which is in the south of the country.

Thank you very much.

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